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COMMUNICATION

President Johnson's First Annual Message

PROFESSOR DUNNING'S admirable article on the authorship of President Johnson's messages leaves one point undetermined: he shows conclusively that Johnson did not write the message of December 4, 1865, but he does not investigate the sources of the ideas therein contained. The quest is indeed of minor importance, because it is made plain that Bancroft was chosen to draft it precisely because his views largely coincided with those of the President. While, however, of little significance, it is not without interest.

The message falls into two parts. (The edition by Richardson was used.) Paragraphs twenty-three to thirty-seven inclusive summarize the work of the departments and were doubtless contributed by the heads of the respective departments. The remaining paragraphs were written by Bancroft and form the important part of the message. The first is conventionally introductory and is not at all in the Johnsonian vein. The next, a full page, is a discussion of the constitutionality of secession, following exactly, in sequence of argument, a much longer discussion in Johnson's most famous speech, that of December 18 and 19, 1860 (*Speeches of Andrew Johnson, President of the United States*, edited by Frank Moore, Boston, 1865, pp. 112-120). Some of the illustrations are taken, however, from other places; the quotation from Jefferson was perhaps suggested by a later portion of the same speech (*ibid.*, 163), while the reference to Jefferson as an asserter of the integrity of the Union was constantly in Johnson's mouth during the war (*e. g.*, *ibid.*, 294). The third does not seem to be based on any particular passage, though it is thoroughly Johnsonian. The fourth is roughly paralleled in the speech already referred to (*ibid.*, 106), which also contains the quotation from Jackson's Nullification Proclamation, summarized by the fifth paragraph (*ibid.*, 111). The sixth and the first part of the seventh are purely conventional; the last two-thirds of the seventh was evidently modelled on an address of the President to an Indiana delegation in April, 1865 (*ibid.*, 481-484). Paragraphs eight to eleven inclusive summarize the presidential plan of reconstruction, as it was known and discussed in every paper in the country. Paragraph twelve follows closely a passage in the previously cited speech of 1860 (*ibid.*, 100). Paragraph thirteen is strongly reminiscent of an interview with George L. Stearns, whose account, dated October 3, 1865, was signed and approved by the President (John Savage, *The Life and Public Services of Andrew Johnson*, New York, 1866, appendix, p. 102). Para-

graphs fourteen to sixteen are largely explanatory of the most recent actions of the administration, and therefore one would not expect to find for them a literary source. Still the sixteenth resembles an address to a delegation of Loyal Southerners in April, 1865 (Moore, *Speeches*, 480).

The burden of the message up to this point is constitutional. Paragraph seventeen takes up the negro problem. The last part of this and the next paragraph are based on the interview with Mr. Stearns (Savage, *Life of Johnson*, app., 102). Paragraph nineteen is based on the President's admirable, though far from cordial speech of October 10, 1865, to the soldiers of the First Regiment of Colored Volunteers from the District of Columbia (*ibid.*, app., 90-95). Paragraph twenty follows first the same speech; the middle section seems to be from the President's reply to a delegation from Pennsylvania on April 27, 1865 (*Life, Speeches and Services of Andrew Johnson*, Philadelphia, T. B. Peterson and Brothers, 1865, pp. 160-161); for the last part I find no parallel. Paragraphs twenty-one and twenty-two discuss monopolies. The twenty-first paragraph is a section of the address last mentioned; for twenty-two I find no parallel, though it is peculiarly Johnsonian.

Paragraphs thirty-eight to forty-two are of the nature of a conclusion. Of these, the last part of forty recalls an address of Johnson while Vice-president, at Washington, April 3, 1865 (Moore, *Speeches*, xliv); forty-two reminds one of the concluding portion of his interview with the South Carolina Delegation, October 13, 1865 (Savage, *Life*, app., 100).

Johnson was not without pride in his speeches; he constantly referred those who wished to know what his policy would be to his record. Doubtless he gave Bancroft the same general direction, and the latter went to work with his trained historical skill to extract the grain from the chaff. It is not necessary, however, to suppose that the historian had directly before him the more recent speeches of the President, though they were all, in some form or other, in print. It is equally possible that the President discussed these matters with him independently, and possibly others for which no direct parallel has been found. It is, at any rate, evident that the attempt was made to have the message voice Johnson's ideas. One cannot, however, read the parallel passages without realizing that the impression created by the message was due to the marshalling of these ideas by Bancroft and the general spirit of moderation which he was able to infuse in the whole.

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